

MANIFESTO

2023



*Delivering a safe, innovative, resilient
and globally competitive built
environment sector in the North West.*

Foreword CEO

Following the launch of ACE's three-year Blueprint and publication our UK Manifesto, I am pleased to introduce ACE's Manifesto for North West of England, outlining the Built Environment sector's policy aspirations for 2023 and beyond.

The North West is a region of great importance to the UK economy, and ACE members play a central role in its development. The region is home to some of the most innovative and ambitious engineering projects, ranging from significant infrastructure schemes the region's major cities, including Liverpool and Manchester.

Our members are fundamental to the programmes and projects in the built environment which will unlock opportunity for the region. Whether that be meeting Net Zero commitments and targets, delivering on promises for regional development, or driving economic growth while boosting productivity, our members' work enables political ambitions to be turned into tangible projects and programmes.

In return, our members, who design, deliver and manage our national infrastructure and the built environment, need long-term plans and the political stability to ensure they can access the skills, financial resource and capacity to deliver what is expected of them.

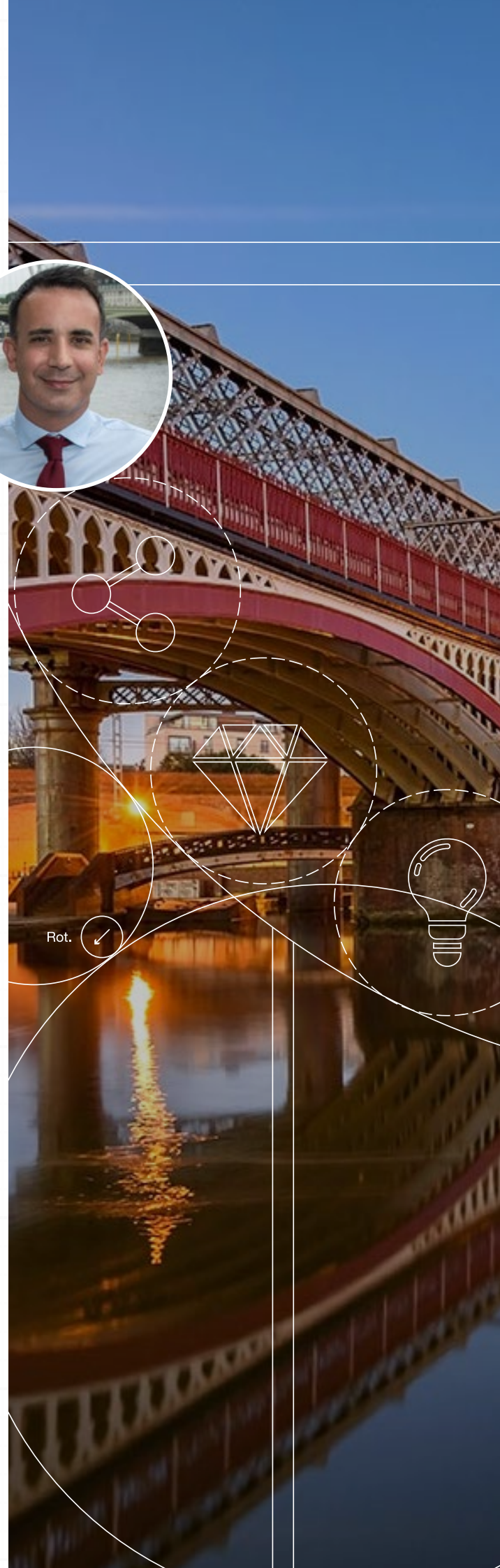
Combined Authorities in the region play an important role in shaping infrastructure priorities, and we work in tandem with them to deliver the projects that are pivotal to the region's success.

As the business association for the Built Environment sector, we will continue to champion the impact of our members' work and ensure all political voices understand that our sector is central to unlocking economic growth, creating jobs, and nurturing opportunity for all.

ACE North West looks forward to working with you to make this happen.



Stephen Marcos Jones
CEO



Foreword ACE Chair



The North West Region has always been a hub for engineering talent, striving for improvement through innovation and excellence for the benefit of our local communities. The Manifesto for 2023 follows the regional committee's view on the areas we need to focus on and with the anticipation of a harder year ahead, innovation will be the key to drive growth in the engineering sector.

In these times of uncertainty, it is clear that innovation will play a crucial role in driving progress and creating new opportunities for the engineering industry. We recognise that the North West has always been at the forefront of engineering excellence, and through this manifesto, we reaffirm our commitment to providing high-quality services that benefit everyone in society.

As a Civil Engineer, I have spent my career focused on delivering social value and making a positive impact on the world we live in. Our work in building new hospitals, homes, and infrastructure, and in addressing the urgent challenge of climate change, has a profound and lasting impact on the communities we serve. The ACE members in the North West and across the UK are leaders in this work, and we are proud to be part of such an inspiring and dedicated community.

We recognise that the engineering industry must embrace change and be more inclusive of the diverse and evolving landscape of people, places, and politics. Our collective voice is important, and we must use our platform to drive positive change and inspire the next generation of engineers. We are committed to working together to create a brighter future for our communities, our industry, and our world.

Sean Keyes

Sean Keyes,
Chair, ACE North West

Introduction

The Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) champions infrastructure and the built environment to government, industry and other stakeholders.

Our members employ over 60,000 in UK and 250,000 worldwide, contributing more than £15 billion to the UK economy. However, the buildings and structures they deliver actively contribute over £570 billion a year of GVA. Our members operate right across the region and contribute significantly to the economy.

Our **2023 North West Manifesto** provides a foundation for working with Combined Authorities and others in the region, and others for ACE to deliver a safe, innovative, resilient and globally competitive built environment sector on behalf of its members – against a backdrop of economic uncertainty.

Whether building a diverse and inclusive workforce, delivering social value, improving procurement practices, rethinking risk, or encouraging new technology and innovation this Manifesto provides realistic recommendations, and an overarching ambition for greater collaboration to achieve these goals.

These are increasingly turbulent political and economic times, yet all recent administrations have committed to supporting infrastructure delivery. This Manifesto provides a basis for the current and future administration to support the sector in unlocking the potential in transport, energy, flood resilience, water, waste, and digital networks.

Innovation, people and social value

If we are to grow and transition our economy, innovation will play a critical part in making that happen. However, the current reality is of a fragmented and inconsistent approach to innovation, increasing challenges over IP, cost, awareness and adoption. We must also recognise that the international market poses both an opportunity and a risk to the sector right across the region.

Our manifesto recommendations aim to drive best practice in innovation and ensure that the Combined Authorities in the region play an active role in creating the conditions to support the sector to be a strong player in an internationally competitive marketplace.





The built environment is not alone with challenges around **people and skills**. We know of the recruitment and retention challenges, the lack of sector-specific data, and inconsistent workplace cultures. Recommendations from across our advocacy groups are aimed at ensuring government can support the delivery of a reliable and diverse talent pool to serve both the immediate and future needs of our industry.

At the heart of all our members' projects is the positive impact it has on local communities in all parts of the region. We also know that **social value** can be an ambiguous concept – difficult to measure, and there continues to be low community engagement in too many areas.

At this current moment in time, many public and private procurement opportunities are focused on price rather than value. Our members in the North West have supported the development of practical solutions as part of this Manifesto, agreeing to develop a set of metrics, language and approaches which will deliver social value.

Finally, to deliver any project, **excellence** and **risk** need to be carefully considered as part of the procurement process. In practice, quality tends to be measured by cost rather than value.

It is also difficult for new companies to attain recognition on the project frameworks of major clients, and the perception of risk has not evolved with the current industry reality – leading to a disproportionate burden on companies. Some of the practical solutions outlined in this Manifesto will ensure continuous quality improvements across the supply chain, support procurement activities, and promote a competitive market.

Recommendations in this Manifesto have been formulated following discussions at the ACE North West Committee. The Committee feeds into the delivery of ACE's three-year Blueprint and ACE will be working with Combined Authorities in the region and other policymakers to make the ambitions in this Manifesto a reality. In a noisy policymaking and political space, it will ensure we have a distinct voice in debates around Net Zero, regional development and skills.



People

A reliable and diverse talent pool to serve the future needs of our industry.



Social value

A common language and approach to delivering social value across the sector which understands and meets the needs of communities.



Excellence

Continuous quality improvement across the supply chain supporting procurement activities and promoting a competitive market.



Risk

A transparent, fair and proportionate appraisal of risk that supports and drives the use and uptake of standard tools.



Innovation

The right conditions to support the UK sector to be a stronger player in an internationally competitive market for new technology.



Association

A relevant, resilient and sustainable business association dedicated to serving its members regionally, nationally and internationally.

Blueprint (2022-2025)

[Click here to view the ACE's Blueprint.](#)





Innovation

Current reality

- A fragmented and inconsistent approach to innovation.
- Challenges over IP, cost, awareness and adoption.
- International market a risk.

2025 Ambition

The right conditions to support the sector to be a stronger player in an internationally competitive market for new technology.

Challenge

Our sector has highlighted that investment in innovation varies across regions, and this can limit overall innovation in the industry. Where there are bigger leaps in innovation, these are inherently a risky proposition, which can be challenging to develop with clients as they can lead to errors. The industry in the region has highlighted that decades of underinvestment in R&D has led to sectors falling behind, particularly in the area of transport.

Recommendation 1: Push for innovation and prototyping investment into the North West, to support and champion innovation.

Recommendation 2: Ensure Government presses ahead with making 'procuring for value' standard practice across the public sector, in particular through the Construction Playbook and the Green Paper on Transforming Public Procurement



Excellence

Current reality

- Quality measurement tends to be eclipsed by cost rather than value.
- Difficult for new companies to attain recognition on project frameworks of major clients.

2025 Ambition

Continuous quality improvement across the supply chain supporting procurement activities and promoting a competitive market.

Challenge

The sector is limited in its ability to deliver excellence as the ongoing lack of R&D and capital spending in the region has affected the ability of the sector to innovate. A common issue across the region is that London and the South East continues to draw human capital and skills away from the regions.

Recommendation 1: Work with combined authorities to secure greater investment in R&D as part of the regional growth agenda.

Recommendation 2: Work with government to ensure that local industrial strategies incentive developers to share best practice in terms of community engagement on major projects, as a driver of excellence.



Social Value

Current reality

- Social value is an ambiguous concept, and difficult to measure.
- Low community engagement continues.
- Focus still on price vs. value.

2025 Ambition

An agreed set of metrics, language, and approaches to delivering social value across the sector.

Challenge

The understanding amongst the client base varies concerning social value. Producing a consistency of language and a commonly agreed set of metrics for the measurement of social value outcomes will be key to solving this issue.

The sector has a lot to offer in delivering social value. However, members are constrained by differing levels of understanding of social value among project commissioners and funding agencies – especially with regards to environmental factors.

Recommendation 1: Agree a Social Value charter with relevant combined authorities, aimed to support the sector, regional growth, and other industries.

Recommendation 2: Highlight to government the importance of publishing a procurement pipeline, allowing companies to sufficiently plan for future resource requirements.



People

Current reality

- Severe challenges in recruitment and retention.
- A lack of sector-specific data.
- Inconsistent workplace cultures.

2025 Ambition

A reliable and diverse talent pool to serve the future needs of our industry.

Challenge

The lower living costs in the region are attractive to people looking to work in our sector. Our members are beginning to see greater diversity of staff applicants., but the overall sector continues to face challenges in being representative of communities in the region.

Recommendation 1: Encourage national and regional government to ensure that successful regional growth is focused on driving up skills in left behind places, boosting opportunities for the sector.

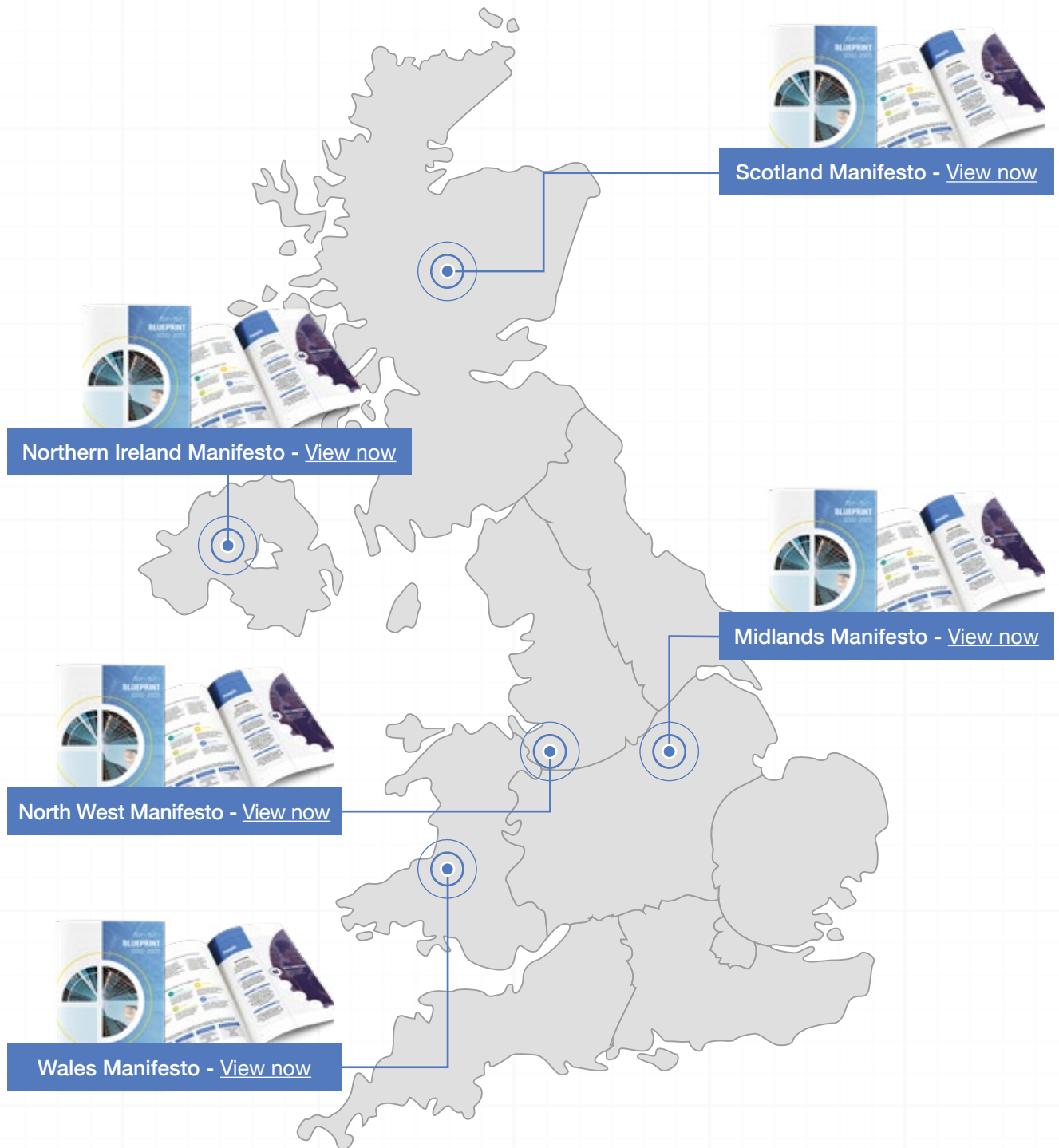
Recommendation 2: Work with HM Treasury to ensure metrics used by the National Infrastructure Bank boost regional skills.

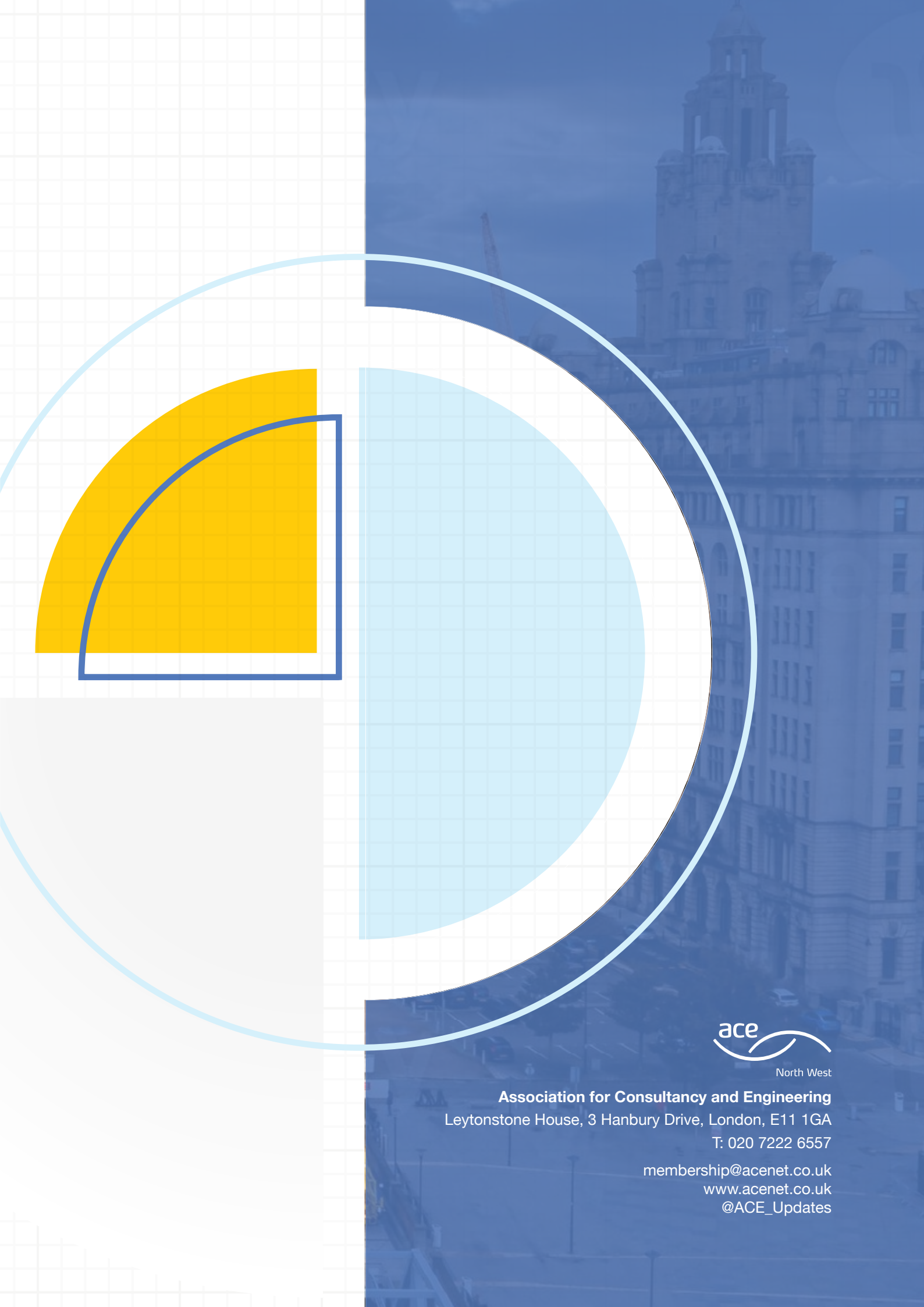


ACE Policy

The Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) is a UK professional organisation that advocates for the interests of consulting and engineering companies. As part of its advocacy efforts, the ACE has published a series of manifestos across the UK that promote the importance of investing in infrastructure to improve the economy.

These manifestos typically include recommendations for policymakers and analysis of trends and challenges in the infrastructure sector. To coincide with this manifesto, ACE has published a [UK-wide manifesto](#).





North West

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